

Twenty-Fifth Sunday in Ord. Time C/2013

The readings of this Sunday talk about human responsibility with regard to possessions. They remind us that all human possessions are but God's gifts. Therefore, they invite us to use them in a way that allows us to do good to others and to prepare us for our final encounter with God.

In the first reading, the prophet Amos denounces the unjust practice of businessmen of the land. Instead of playing a fair game in their business, they exploit the needy and take advantage of the poor. Only one thing is on their mind and counts for them, namely making a profit. But, God who sees the hidden intention of the heart of people will not forget such an injustice and mistreatment of the needy.

What is behind this text is the idea that God is present in the poor and the needy. In that sense, any concern for the poor is God's concern and any cheating on the needy is a cheating on God. The text warns us also on the misconception that financial prosperity is a sign of spiritual prosperity. Another idea is the truth that all the things we possess in the world are God's gifts. Therefore, we have to manage them in a way that reinforces our relationship with our fellows and with God our maker. All that helps us understand what is at stake in today's Gospel as Jesus speaks of the parable of the dishonest manager.

The Gospel starts with the mention of a manager who was reported to his boss as squandering his property. On this fact, the boss decided to get rid of him and asked him to give a financial report of his management.

Afraid by the new situation in which he was about to find himself without a job, the manager prepared some astuteness that could save his skin once the position was lost. He, then, called his master's debtors and made a financial deal with them. To the first who owed a debt of one hundred measures of olive oil, he let him write fifty. To another who owed one hundred measures of wheat, he let him write eighty.

Because of that prudent acting, the master praised the dishonest manager. That shows, Jesus added, that people of this world deal more prudently with their own generation than do the people of God. Therefore, it is better to make friends with dishonest wealth so that when it comes to fail, those may welcome us in heaven.

After that, the Gospel gives a lesson of life, namely that a person who is trustworthy in small business will also show trustworthiness in big, while the dishonest one will show the same pattern in the big ones. Therefore, if a person is not trustworthy with dishonest wealth, it would be difficult for him to be given true wealth.

In the end, the Gospel finishes with another lesson of life, namely that no one can serve two masters, because he will be divided by loving one or hating the other and vice versa. Therefore, it is impossible to love God and money at the same time.

What do we learn from this Gospel? The point I want to bring today is about the logic of God's business. Let me start this way. We are a country of business enterprise. A business is good in so far as it is successful; otherwise it will go bankrupt.

The success of a business depends on many factors, like the intelligence of the manager, the dynamism of the workers, the adaption to the changing market, the ability

to generate and maximize the profits, the capacity of competitiveness, etc. A key word to business is profit. As long as a business makes profit and respects the rules of the market, everything is fine.

However, what Jesus proposes us today obeys other principles than what we are used to in Human business. First, we have the principle of urgency. Like the manager who was about to lose his job, but made a financial deal with the debtors of his boss for a future gain in his favor, we have to be clever in dealing with the things of the soul. We have to make an immediate decision with regard to our eternal salvation.

In that sense, we understand why the master commends the bad manager, not that he approves his dishonesty, but because instead of squandering his money as he did before, he is able to build strong relationships that will profit him in his unemployment.

The second principle is that of friendship and solidarity. In fact, God has gifted us differently, and some of us are better off than others, so that we can make a difference in the world with our wealth. In that sense, our wealth has to be used not only for ourselves, but also in doing good to others, especially the less fortunate. After all, we are just stewards of God's gifts and not owners. What is expected of us is good management and not squandering of the wealth of our master.

The third principle is honesty. This is a very serious one, because the way we carry out a small task can say a lot on our fitness or unfitness to be trusted with a bigger one. In that sense, we understand why the one who is trustworthy or dishonest in small things can be trustworthy or dishonest in great things. After all, what we get in heaven depends on how we use the things of this world.

The last principle is that of a unified heart. In order to serve God really we need to have a unified and not a divided heart. We have to give to him all our being and all ourselves, body and soul. That is why the Gospel says that no one can serve two masters. In that sense, our donation to God should be exclusive and total.

All that would be difficult to fulfill if we are not assisted by God's grace. That is why we have to pray, as St Paul suggests, that God may help us to work in this world according to the principles of his kingdom by doing good to others. Let us pray in particular for businessmen so that they put human relationships above economic interests. We pray that the present difficult financial situation may not destroy our relationship with one another. May God bless you all!

Amos 8: 4-7; 1Timothy 2: 1-8; Luke 16: 1-13



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